

KEVIN HUMPHREYS

Keynote Speaker

COURAGE | COMPASSION | MENTAL ILLNESS | INSPIRATION | HOPE





About Kevin

Kevin's moving story enables him to share powerful messages about mental illness whilst inspiring men and women to have courageous conversations.

Ex-Army Officer, rescue helicopter pilot and mental health ambassador, Kevin Humphreys knows what it's like to hit rock bottom. For a long time, Kevin kept his post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression and anxiety buried deep. Today, Kevin shares what happens when you hit rock bottom, how he figured it out, and the triggers that made a difference in transforming his life.

Kevin's 20 year military career flying Black Hawk and Chinook helicopters for the Australian Army is nothing short of stellar. At just 21, he earned the keys to a Blackhawk helicopter. Kevin would go on to complete several operational tours as both a pilot and commander in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan plus humanitarian operations in Papua New Guinea.

Despite Kevin's direct exposure to rocket attacks, machine gun fire and highly risky rescue operations it wasn't these experiences that made him feel his life was falling apart. Kevin says, "At the time, I didn't know a single person who had experienced mental illness or suicide." This fueled Kevin's sense of failure and shame for 'allowing' a breakdown to happen, and a belief that he didn't have the strength to go on.

A diagnosis of PTSD, depression and anxiety felt unacceptable to Kevin. While his return to work took nine months, Kevin kept his breakdown and illness a secret for seven years. Over time and with help, Kevin realised that he wasn't a failure and his secret was holding him back from living a full life.



“My feeling of failure was absolute and total. I felt I’d failed my country, the Army, my unit, my parents, my wife, my kids”.



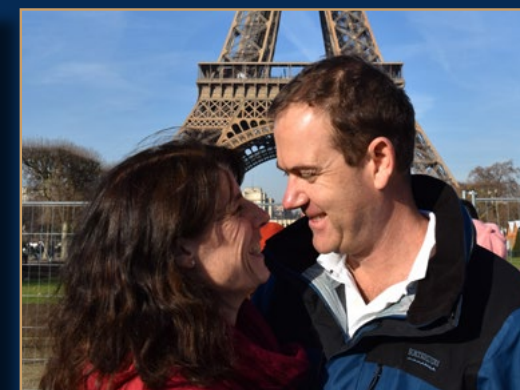
You'll often hear Kevin say, "whilst you've got a brain and a blood supply you're susceptible to mental illness, it doesn't discriminate. The question is, will you have the courageous conversations required to turn this around?".

When he joined the Army Kevin believed his life purpose was to serve his country through the profession of arms. Today, by pulling back the curtains on his own experience, Kevin's purpose remains to serve but it now involves destigmatising mental illness, and empowering others to show courage and seek help.

It's Kevin's passionate belief that mental illness is normal, manageable and recoverable for most people. He shows that there is life after diagnosis and that it's possible to return to the top of your game and beyond.

Since his recovery, Kevin has become a Flight Instructor and Examiner, and has held positions of Chief Pilot and Director of Operations in Search and Rescue helicopter organisations.

Kevin is a Community Ambassador for Mates4Mates, the Patron of PTSD Dogs Australia and the Mental Health Ambassador for AIRBUS Australia Pacific. He is touring all AIRBUS facilities across Australia and New Zealand in 2019.





Key Messages

Kevin deeply connects with people. His captivating story is heart-felt and resonates with many regardless of age, gender or industry. After one of Kevin's presentations people experience a tangible difference with how they think and deal with mental illness, both at home and in the workplace.

The strength in Kevin's presentation is realising that his story is the same as thousands of others. And while collectively, we're addressing the stigma around mental illness it still requires individual courage and compassion to speak-up, and convert these conversations to the new 'normal'.

Kevin inspires men and women to have courageous conversations about mental illness whether they be in the boardroom, warehouse or frontline.

Kevin's key messages are:

- **Mental illness is normal, manageable and recoverable for most people**
- **Mental illness can take you to new heights and successes**
- **Even if you don't know what words to use, just start talking. Even if you don't know how to respond, just keep listening**

Perception, Permission and Purpose

In this presentation, Kevin breaks down the myths of mental illness prevalent in our communities. Kevin takes his audience down the rabbit hole that was his deadly serious life at home and abroad in the Army. During Kevin's time in the Australian Defence Force, 34 military personnel died in helicopter accidents, he had a mid-air collision with a boat and experienced rocket attacks. On one occasion, he led nine others to knowingly fly into a maelstrom of fire to extract 70 foreign special forces soldiers. On another mission he balanced a 20 tonne helicopter on a cliff edge in the middle of the night in an effort to insert other special forces soldiers, a precarious endeavour where the slightest kiss of the blades on the rocks would mean it was all over.

The burden of leadership and a workplace with a toxic command environment triggered Kevin's depression, anxiety and ultimately his breakdown. Kevin shares his poignant story and the recovery rollercoaster that involved the power of visualisation and reuniting his head and heart, in what he describes as the longest journey one will ever take. And finally, to one of his proudest moments when Kevin was acknowledged as a role model for a recent recipient of the Military Order of William (equivalent to Victoria Cross) in the Netherlands.



“...fantastic insight into mental health effects and management within aviation...”

Senior Flight Instructor
Australian Army Aviation

Fortune Favours the Failed

Here, Kevin explains the notions of failure and success, how we've each created our own definition of what that means, and how it has the power to hold us back. Through Kevin's own experience he explains how anxiety and depression is linked to our idea of failure. When Kevin started using visualisation it helped him to climb out of his dark hole. By changing his understanding of acceptance and taking responsibility for his failure, Kevin was set free.

Kevin believes that how we each respond to our notion of failure is best resolved by taking total responsibility for self, and that it's our corresponding actions that facilitate growth and fulfilment. Today, Kevin's life after 'failure', including his work as a rescue helicopter pilot, has provided him with resilience and insights to achieving higher performance.

“Highly recommended! Listening to his story, what struck me most was the personal courage he demonstrated time and again. Kevin's messages are positive and he is living proof that despite PTSD, you can get back to the top of your game.”

David Wilton
Senior Manager Defence Liaison
Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation



Keynote Presentations

Courage, Compassion and Consciousness

In this presentation, Kevin relays his experience of moving from fear to fearless and how his courageous journey to freedom is one we can take together. It's recognising a worthy goal and taking actions to achieve it, despite the presence of fear.

Wrapped up in letting go of our inner 'failure' critic is compassion and consciousness, and how we can cultivate the ability to face our fears and make decisions with greater fortitude. Kevin says that the stories we tell ourselves are the most powerful and most potent weapons we encounter daily. And that courage is about us each taking action with masculine and feminine energy, and becoming hooked on successful behaviours. Kevin's storytelling inspires and moves audiences to consider that PTSD, anxiety and depression are not disorders but a normal response triggered by fear.

In Kevin's presentations, he creates hope and the belief that we all have within us the required courage and compassion to tackle any challenging setbacks or feelings.

“I've never seen a room of 160+ construction workers so silent – you could've heard a pin drop.”

Site Supervisor
Hutchinson Builders



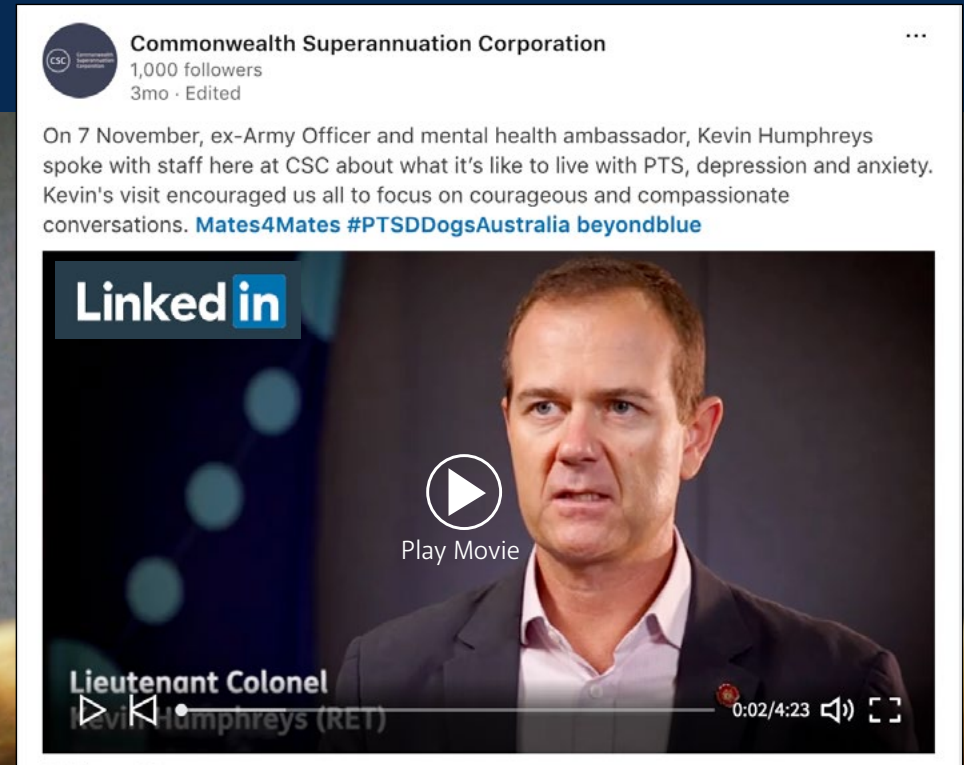


Role Model Recognition

Perhaps the highest praise that Kevin has received came in August 2018 when he visited The Hague to attend the investiture ceremony of a Dutch colleague who was being awarded the Military Order of William (equivalent to the Victoria Cross).

When introducing Kevin to the King and Queen of The Netherlands, the recipient stated that Kevin was his role model for his actions that led to the award.

What they're saying about Kevin



“Kevin is an incredibly engaging speaker with a remarkable story to tell. Kevin’s telling of how he reached the top of his game in the military and then experiencing the depths of PTSD and depression, followed by working his way out from those dark days is motivating and inspirational. Kevin’s messages are powerful and important; his story is one you need to hear.”

Damon Whittock
Corporate Affairs Manager, Member and Employer Services
Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation



“Kevin, thank you. You smashed the stereotype of an individual with a mental illness. Having the courage to speak so openly as our keynote speaker and sharing your first-hand experience was compelling, candid and provocative. Everyone left not just informed, but transformed. You helped us understand that we need to be “doing it better” and that there is hope for recovery, and the small things that we do on a daily basis can make a difference.”

Adam Bernhardt
Safety Manager, Airbus Australia Pacific

Conferences

Kevin has presented at the following conferences:

2018

Australia and New Zealand Disaster Management Conference (ANZDMC)

Australia and New Zealand Search and Rescue Conference (ANZSAR)

Voices of Independent Women (audience 170 women)

Management in Nursing and Aged Care (audience 200)

Australian Tax Office (audience 120)

Hutchisons Builders construction site (audience 170 men)

Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation (audience 200)

Airbus Australia Pacific (audience 100)

Queensland Government – Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (audience 100)

2016 and 2017

Mindset and Wellness conference (audience of over 500 people),

Australia and New Zealand Disaster Management Conference (ANZDMC)

Australia and New Zealand Search and Rescue Conference (ANZSAR)

Property Development conference (audience of over 700 people).

In 2019, Kevin is touring every AIRBUS facility in Australia and New Zealand as part of its mental health program.



“Kevin gave a heartfelt and illuminating presentation at our conference. Thank you for putting us in touch with Kevin – it was the best thing we did.”

Aged care conference organiser

More about Kevin

For the last 10 years Kevin has featured in a number of books, media stories and other projects.

Australian War Memorial Portrait



In 2009 official war artists Lyndell Brown and Charles Green painted a portrait of Kevin for the Australian War Memorial based on his deployments to Afghanistan in 2006 and 2007.

[To read the story behind the portrait click here.](#)

Books

In 2016, veteran journalist Chris Masters interviewed Kevin as part of his book 'No Front Line – 'Australia's Special Forces at War in Afghanistan' about Kevin's involvement in a battle 10 years earlier. This mission was also included in a Canadian book titled 'No Ordinary Men' by Colonel Bernd Horn.

Magazines

Returned Services League magazine (Queensland) – October 2017. Readership of 70,000 people.

[To view article, click here.](#)

QWeekend Magazine published a feature story about Kevin in the lead up to ANZAC Day 2018. Readership of 307 000+ people.

Air Pilot – December 2018. Readership of 5,000.

The Australian War Memorial

In 2017, Kevin was interviewed by Chris Masters on behalf of the AWM for their 'From the Shadows' – the history of Australia's Special Forces' exhibition. The interview took two parts; firstly the operational aspects of missions in Afghanistan, secondly the impact on families and individually.

[View here.](#)

Both videos are available here:

[Video 1 - Click here](#) (see 15:10 mark).

[Video 2 - Click here](#) (see 08:50 mark).

More about Kevin

Podcast

September 2018 – Kevin was interviewed on The Rotary Wing Show podcast to talk about mental health in aircrew. With so much to talk about, it was split into two episodes - Part 1 is Kevin's operational history that gives some context to Part 2, which is the mental illness episode.

[Podcast 1 - Click here](#)

[Podcast 2 - Click here](#)



Social Media

September 2018 – Kevin was interviewed as part of the launch for the Stand Tall 4 Post Traumatic Stress convoy. It's a quick (less than 2 mins) snapshot of what Kevin talks about and why. It had over 25,000 global hits on social media during the 3 week convoy.

[You Tube click here](#)

November 2018 – Following Kevin's presentation to the Commonwealth Superannuation Corporation, a short 4.5 minute video was launched to support their external messaging. The video was distributed to their 700,000+ clients, and released on Facebook and LinkedIn where it received over 4,000 views in a few short weeks.

[Here's a link to the video on the CSC LinkedIn page.](#)



Contact Kevin

Kevin Humphreys
P.O. Box 793
ASHGROVE, QLD 4060

Phone: 1300 139 139
Email: kevin@kevinhumphreys.com.au
Web: www.kevinhumphreys.com.au

